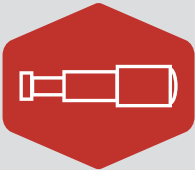




Lesson 8: Mark 1:40–45 Jesus Is Willing

Main Idea: This lesson explores Jesus' life-changing interaction with a leper and encourages you to welcome His touch in your life and those around you.

Scripture: Mark 1:40–45



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In ancient times, there was a dreaded class of skin diseases all grouped together under the name leprosy. The disease was considered contagious and deadly. Today, it is believed to have probably been Hansen's disease, causing sores all over the body and the shriveling of limbs. It could cause fingers and toes to fall off as well as organ failure and nerve damage. There were few known survivors, and everyone who contracted the disease was marked for life, segregated from family and friends, and ended up living in extreme poverty. For some, leprosy was considered a curse. Some Jewish teachers blamed the disease on the leper's sin (often the sin of slander).¹ It literally rendered a person untouchable in the minds of people.

Worse than the physical pain of leprosy was the psychological and emotional pain it brought. Mark's audience would have been familiar with Leviticus 13, which describes how lepers were spiritually and physically unclean and outcasts from the community. The law required that "the person with such

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 132.

an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out ‘Unclean! Unclean!’² Lepers would have lived alone. They would have been treated like dead men walking. When Mark begins chapter one, verse 40 with “and a leper came,” the first-century hearer would have snapped to attention.

The leper decides that he will break all the rules and make one brave attempt for help. Jesus does something that no one else would have done: He touches the leper. Leprosy causes loss of feeling and numbness in one’s body. But the moment Jesus touches the leper, he *feels* a touch. Jesus’ touching of the leper not only resulted in his being cured (v. 42) but also revealed Jesus’ attitude toward the ceremonial law. He boldly placed love and compassion over ritual and regulation.³

Jesus breaks all protocol. He reaches through an invisible but strong restraint. Jesus, in the eyes of the people, opens himself up to leprosy. Afterward, Jesus instructs the leper to confirm his healing with the leaders so he can be readmitted to society. Jesus wants the leper to follow a biblical process to show himself clean.

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 630.

³ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 630.

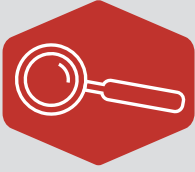


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Some situations in life are so dire that normal, human ways of handling difficult situations just do not fit. During such times, we come face to face with our helplessness. Some situations and people require the kind of help only God can provide. They may be untouchable (un-help-able) to us, but what is impossible for us is completely possible for God. Jesus wants to touch the untouchable. In our text, Jesus says, "I will" to the leper, and his life is forever changed. Here are some lessons we can learn from this process:

- It is sometimes easier to believe in God's power rather than in God's mercy.
- Jesus feels our pain in the most hopeless situation.
- No matter our situation, Jesus is willing to take our place.
- No matter our situation, Jesus will pay the ultimate price.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

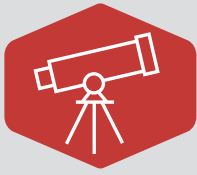
 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?